

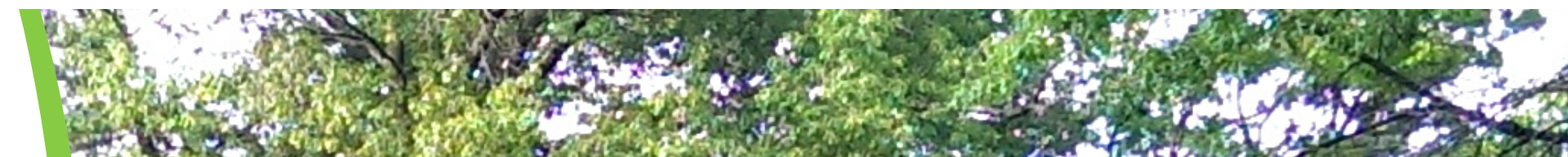


2020 ANNUAL REPORT



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Message from Nate Alger, County Administrator



2020.....what can I say but, wow or “welcome to the GT County 2020 annual report.”

It is our responsibility to every citizen of Grand Traverse County to ensure that the services provided to our community are carried out in a fair, efficient, and effective manner. This task can be challenging enough under normal circumstances, much less while dealing with a pandemic like the Coronavirus Pandemic. 2020 was a time of directing significant resources to manage the pandemic while still providing our community's needed services. County employees rose to the challenge and adapted their work environment and methodology to provide services in a new environment. We are now in a world where "pivoting" and partnerships are required elements of every plan we complete.

Fortunately, our community has also embraced the partnership and challenge, and we have worked together since March to manage the pandemic. This partnership started on March 13, 2020, when we created the Grand Traverse County COVID-19 Joint Operation's Center (JOC). Community leaders from government, health and human services, education, and the business community meet regularly to create a community-wide approach to the many issues we face. There is no question in my mind that our community's relative success through the pandemic is attributed to the JOC's efforts.

This report represents Grand Traverse County's response to the pandemic, the uninterrupted provision of services, and the adaption, innovation, and dedication of County employees over the past year. This report shows our commitment to excellent public service even in difficult times. This report also highlights innovation with technology implementation, like the online building permit system, or "EPIC GT."

In 2020, the County also reaffirmed its commitment to financial strength by funding the MERS pension obligation with the goal of being fully funded in the next 12 to 14 years. 2020 was also a busy year for projects, including the construction of the Boardman Lake Loop, purchasing the Camp Pugsley Gun Range for law enforcement training, transitioning the Cherry Capital Airport's governance model, and certainly not least, doing it all and still beating the 2020 budget.

I want to thank all Grand Traverse County employees for persevering in 2020 and our community for all of your support. I am proud to help lead a great organization that made progress in so many ways in the face of unprecedented challenges, and I look forward to what the future brings.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "N. Alger". The signature is fluid and cursive, written on a white background.



2020 County Department Highlights

The list below shows the various services Grand Traverse County provides residents day in and day out. This list is not all-inclusive but represents a snapshot of the positive impact County employees make in our community.



Parks and Recreation

339 reservations were made for field, pavilion, and other facility rentals. The Parks and Recreation Department served over **7,252** individuals.

Register of Deeds

Receipted over **\$8,212,780.00** with a record **25,590** recordings.

Circuit Court Records

Filed **1,363** new cases.

Treasurer's Office

Issued **826** Passports.

Construction Code Department

Issued **1,096** building, **1,732** electrical, **2,242** mechanical, and **1,043** plumbing permits.

County Clerk

Issued **648** assumed names, **1,826** birth certificates, **1,544** death certificates, **539** marriage licenses, **1,816** CPL licenses.

Health Department

The Health Department worked to keep our community safe throughout 2020 by offering free drive-thru COVID-19 testing and countless hours of contact tracing and providing community updates. Other services to the public included **5,207** soil erosion inspections, **188** beach monitoring samples reviewed, and **559** routine food service inspections.

2020 County Department Highlights

Treasurer's Office

In 2020 the foreclosure process was adjusted and extended over time by multiple executive orders. While working remotely and with limited physical interaction, the County Treasurer's staff worked with taxpayers to ensure that residents could pay their property taxes by the amended deadlines. Staff worked with property owners to ensure that all taxpayers that requested more time to pay due to their income being affected by COVID were granted extensions.

Information Technology

Information Technology (I.T.) located, built, and deployed 200 laptops due to COVID-19. To support remote work, the I.T. Department implemented a virtual private network (VPN) infrastructure for all 200 users. This feat was no small effort. The I.T. staff met and exceeded the organization's expectations.

Finance Department

The Finance Department accomplished its primary goal in 2020 of managing the general fund budget and completed 2020 with a favorable overall budget variance despite the COVID-19 pandemic. General fund revenues exceeded budgeted revenues, and expenditures were less than budgeted.

14th consecutive year



On March 11, 2020, we received an award from the Government Finance Officers Association for our 2018 comprehensive annual financial report.

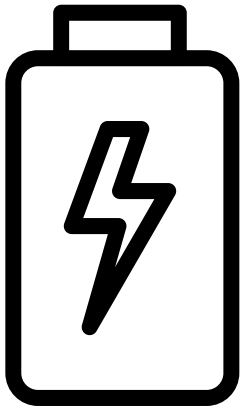
Resource Recovery Department

The Resource Recovery Department's RecycleSmart hotline received over 3,000 phone calls in 2020. The department conducted Household Hazardous Waste (HHW), scrap tire collections, and battery drop-off recycling programs that captured:

98,502lbs
of HHW



Over 16,000lbs
of batteries



60,000lbs of
scrap tires



Collaboration in a Time of Crisis

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Grand Traverse County created the Joint Operations Center (JOC). The JOC brought together community leaders from broad sections of the county — local units of government, school districts, health care, and private sector organizations. The JOC provided a unified source of information communicated through the Grand Traverse County COVID-19 website. It provided press releases and social media content and hosted federal and state representatives to keep the community informed of the pandemic's effects on the community and the needed guidance in response to the pandemic. Since the start of this crisis, the JOC has met every week and continues to meet to support the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine.

The pandemic impacted senior citizens more than other segments of our population. The County employees at the Senior Center Network and the Commission on Aging have done a tremendous job of helping our seniors through this crisis. This help has ranged from providing daily check-ins, tax assistance, and shopping. The Commission on Aging and Senior Center Network have continued to serve our senior population by distributing frozen meals weekly to a total of 2,519 seniors and providing nearly 13,000 wellness checks by telephone.

Grand Traverse County also partnered with the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation by facilitating federal COVID CARES funding through a Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) grant to reimburse and help pay for COVID-related expenses. Child and Family Services, Goodwill, Grand Traverse Pavilions, and Michael's Place are just a few organizations that utilized the grant through this collaboration.

Many County departments stepped up to address the pandemic. But out of all the departments, the County Health Department deserves special recognition. The staff worked almost around the clock to help our community navigate through this difficult time. They drafted preparedness plans for various schools, nonprofit organizations, and businesses. They set up testing sites and performed contact tracing. And they are now ensuring County residents can be vaccinated. County Health Department staff's dedication and service to others serve as a bright light in a dark time.



Long Term Financial Stability

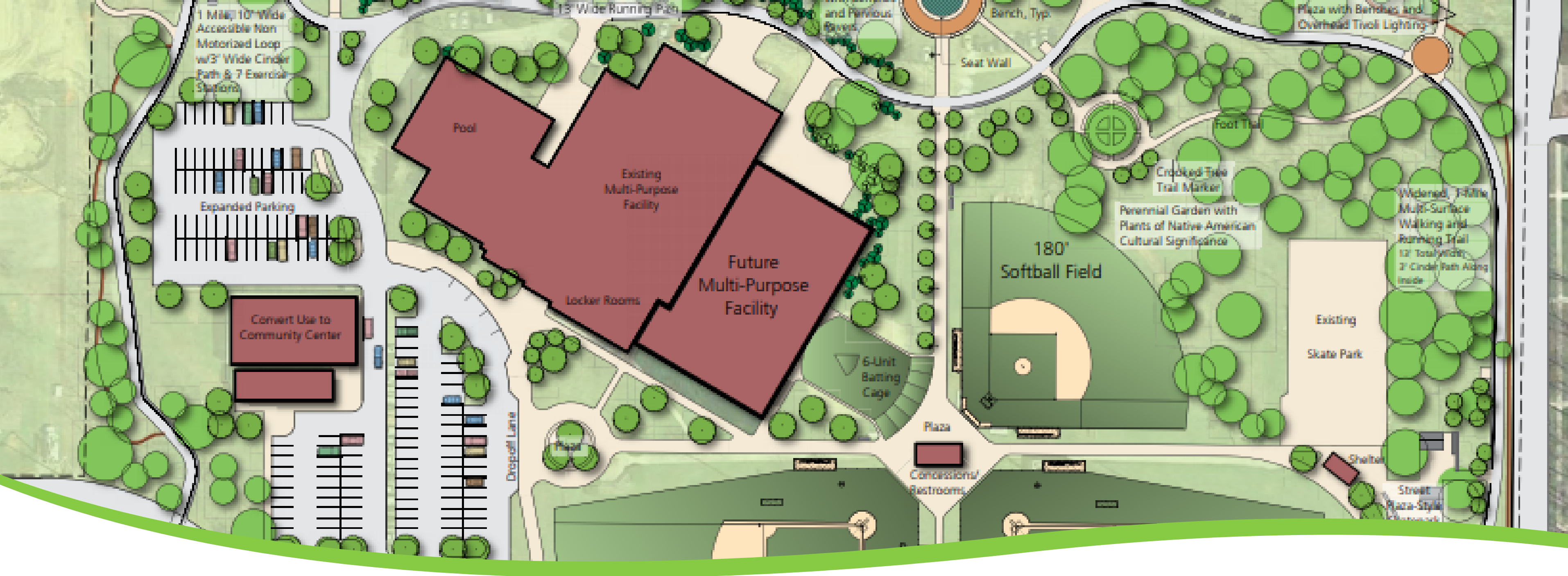
MERS Pension Funding Policy

In a continued effort to reduce the unfunded pension liability, the Grand Traverse County Board of Commissioners updated the County Fund Balance Policy in 2020. This update provides for a percentage of any annual increase of the fund balance to be applied to the County's annual payment to MERS. In 2020, the County made a \$7 million payment to MERS with a planned \$7.85 million payment in 2021. These large scheduled payments mean the MERS pension fund will be fully funded by 2034.

GovInvest Pension Liability Calculator

Along with updating the Fund Balance Policy in 2020, the County has partnered with the financial consulting firm GovInvest. GovInvest has provided the County a web-based service called the Pension Liability Calculator. By utilizing this customized software, County staff can project how future contribution fluctuations will affect the unfunded pension liability. This tool also allows the County to run “what if” scenarios that help determine future contributions needed to be fully funded in the next 12-14 years.





Improving Public Infrastructure

Civic Center Master Site Plan

The new master site plan for the Civic Center Park was developed by Beckett and Raeder, Inc. and adopted by the Parks and Recreation Commission, with some improvement projects already begun. Some changes highlighted in the new master plan include adding another ice rink/multipurpose facility, two pickleball courts, batting cages, improvements to the basketball courts, and the perimeter walking loop. Now that the site plan has been approved, a final report and project costs will be provided, and the Parks and Recreation Commission will seek grant funds and community support. Rotary Charities played an essential role in kicking off the master planning for the Civic Center by providing a seed grant that helped fund the site planning process.

Improving Public Infrastructure

Airport Authority

In 2019, Grand Traverse County, Leelanau County, and the Northwestern Regional Airport Commission held several meetings and hearings to study changing Cherry Capital Airport's governance from a commission to an authority. In December of 2020, the Grand Traverse County Board of Commissioners passed a resolution incorporating Cherry Capital Airport into the Northwestern Regional Airport Authority. By becoming an authority, Cherry Capital Airport will be empowered and better equipped to improve and expand its services for area businesses and residents and the thousands of visitors to our area every year.



Boardman Lake Loop Trail Project

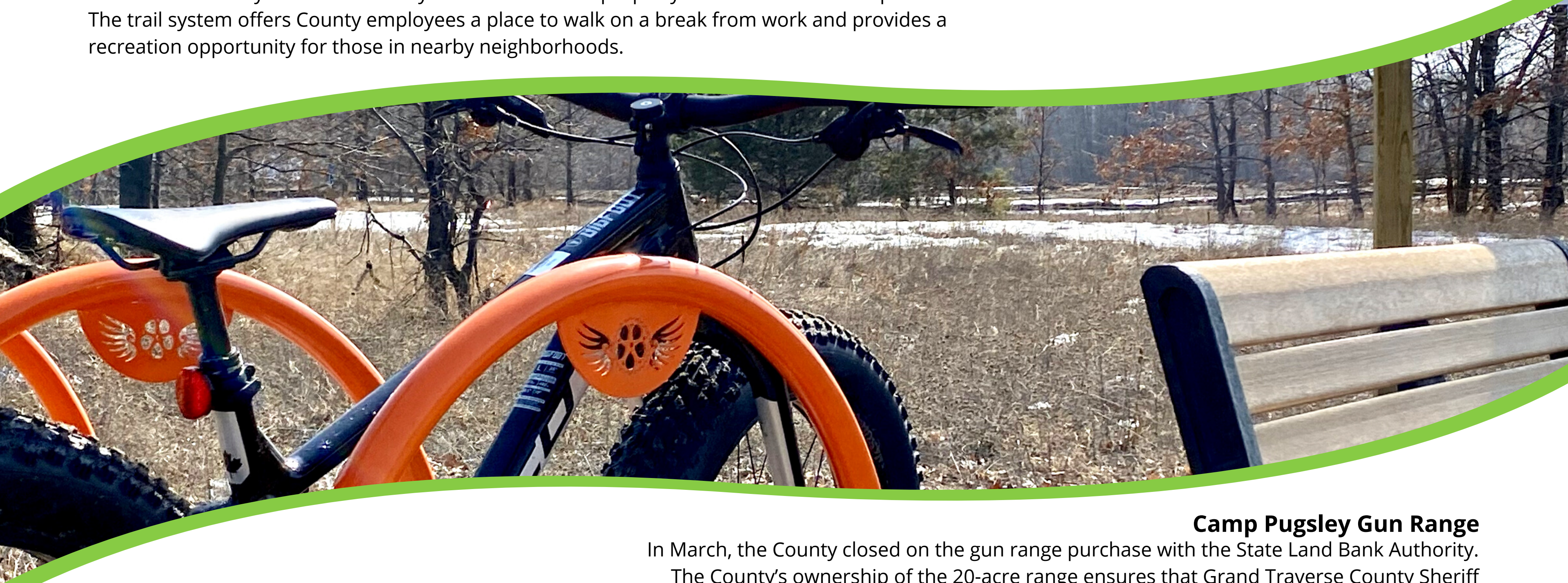
The County partnered with the City of Traverse City and TART Inc to complete the loop trail system around Boardman Lake. Groundbreaking and construction have begun on the first segment of the Boardman Lake Loop Trail, from 14th Street to Dendrin Drive at the NMC University Center. This portion of the trail is expected to be completed by early 2021. The remaining segment of the trail, to be completed in the future, will lead to Medalie Park. The Boardman Lake Loop highlights the area's natural beauty and showcases our community's art and culture. More importantly, it provides more recreation activities for residents and visitors.



Improving Public Infrastructure

LaFranier Loops Project

In 2020, the Health Department of Northwest Michigan provided the County a \$10,000 grant that allowed the County to install a trail system in the vacant property next to the Health Department. The trail system offers County employees a place to walk on a break from work and provides a recreation opportunity for those in nearby neighborhoods.



Camp Pugsley Gun Range

In March, the County closed on the gun range purchase with the State Land Bank Authority. The County's ownership of the 20-acre range ensures that Grand Traverse County Sheriff deputies and other local police officers have access to critical and necessary training that ultimately will keep our citizens safe.

Enhancing Services with New Technology

Electronic Permitting and Inspection Center - EPIC-GT

An online permitting platform, EPIC-GT gives residents, builders, developers, and others a single portal to apply for permits related to construction such as addressing, building, land use, and soil erosion. Successfully utilized through the Grand Traverse County Construction Code Department and East Bay Township since the fall of 2020, Grand Traverse County plans to improve and expand the project in 2021.

► *Welcome to EPIC-GT*

Grand Traverse County ♦ Electronic Permitting & Inspections Center

Great Lakes Conference Room

In 2020, the County's I.T. and Facilities Management Department turned empty office space at the Governmental Center into a state-of-the-art conference room. The Great Lakes Conference Room is equipped with the latest technology needed for video/audio conferencing and group presentations.

Acuity Scheduling

A web-based scheduling system implemented in the Spring of 2020, Acuity assisted the County Clerk, Treasurer, and Register of Deeds offices schedule 2,641 appointments in 2020. The Acuity system has allowed the County offices to continue scheduling services for the public while adhering to MDHHS COVID-19 guidelines. In January 2021, the Grand Traverse County Health Department began utilizing Acuity Scheduling to schedule COVID-19 vaccine appointments.



2020 Board of Commissioners

About the Board of Commissioners

The Grand Traverse County Board of Commissioners is the chief legislative and policy-making body of Grand Traverse County Government. Commissioners are elected to 2-year terms from districts that are roughly equal in population. A chair is elected at the first meeting of each new term and a vice-chair is elected at the first meeting of each new year by the Commissioners.

Chair



Rob Hentschel

District #7: East Bay 2, 3,
Paradise 1, 2, Union, Fife Lake

Vice-Chair



Ron Clous

District #5: Blair 1, 2, 4, Green
Lake 1, Grant Mayfield



Betsy Coffia

District #1: Peninsula 1, 2,
Traverse City 7, 8, 9



Bryce Hundley

District #2: Garfield 3, 4,
Traverse City 1, 3, 10



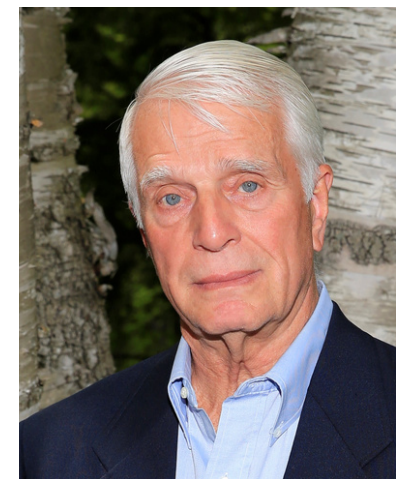
Brad Jewett

District #3: Blair 3,
Garfield 1, 2, 5, 6



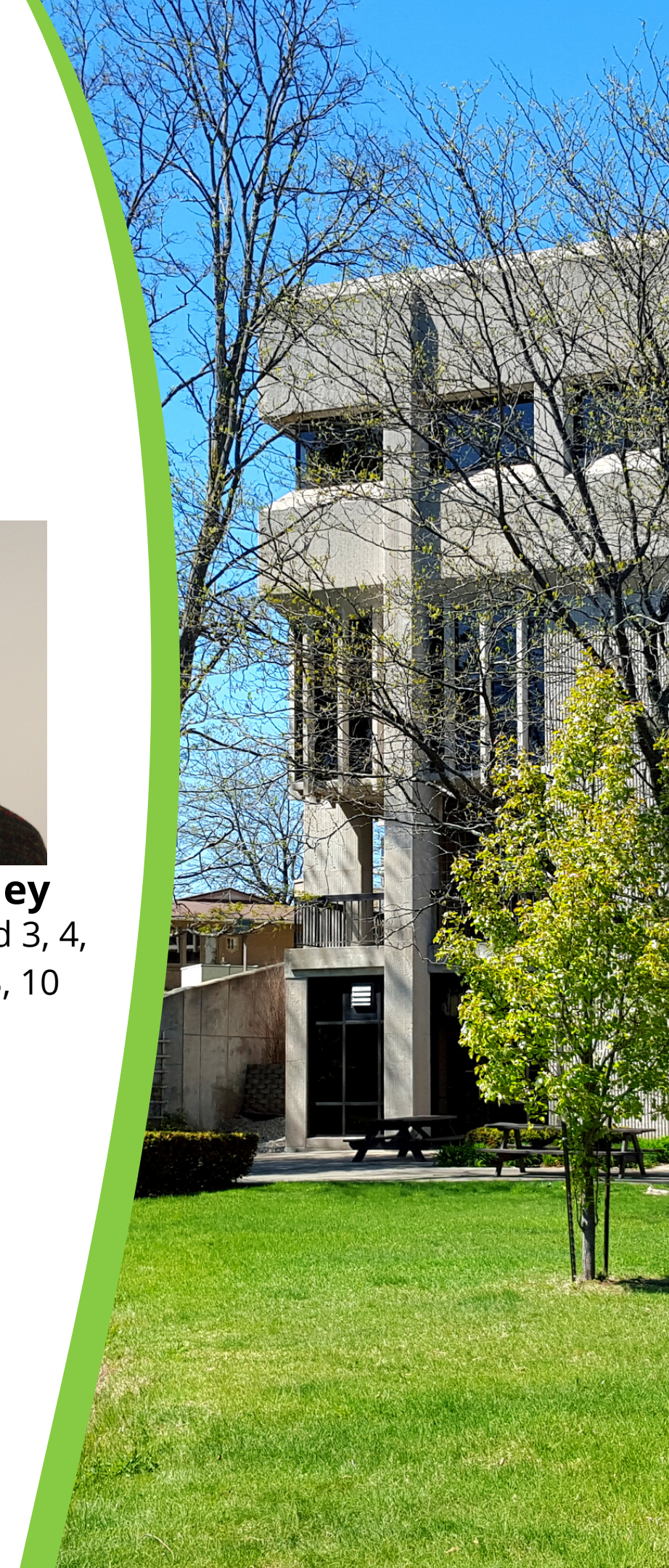
Addison Wheelock Jr.

District #4: Green Lake 2,
Long Lake 1, 2, 3



Gordie LaPointe

District #6: Acme 1, 2,
East Bay 1, 4, Whitewater





Major Board Actions in 2020

The Board of Commissioners acted on a wide range of issues and initiatives within Grand Traverse County in 2020. Listed below are a few highlights from throughout the year.

Michigan Indigent Defense Counsel Coordinator

The Board of Commissioners approved a service agreement with Paul Jarboe of the law firm Jarboe and Pfeil. Mr. Jarboe serves as the County's Michigan Indigent Defense Commission (MIDC) coordinator and oversees the implementation and compliance with MIDC standards.

Updated County Employment Policies

County Commissioners updated the Equal Employment Policy and the Sexual Harassment Policy to extend protections to LGBTQ individuals and better protect county employees.

Stepping Up Initiative

The Board of Commissioners authorized the Board Chair and the County Administrator to sign a resolution authorizing Grand Traverse County's participation in the Stepping Up Initiative. This initiative allows the County to collect data on the number of individuals entering our jail with mental illness. This is a first step in working towards diverting those with mental illness from entering our jail.

911 Surcharge

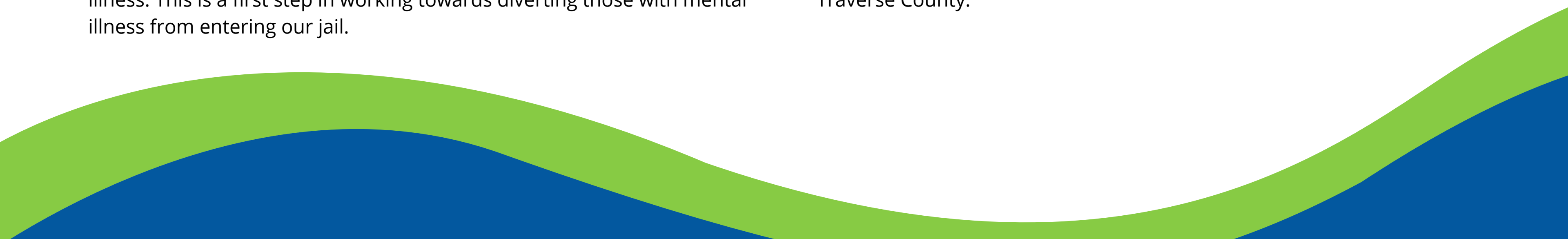
The Board of Commissioners approved the 911 surcharge ballot language and filed the appropriate paperwork with the County Clerk for the initiative to appear on the November general election ballot.

Updated Policy for County Wide Millage Requests

The Board passed a motion placing all county millage proposals on the November election ballot to ensure representation from the greatest possible number of voters.

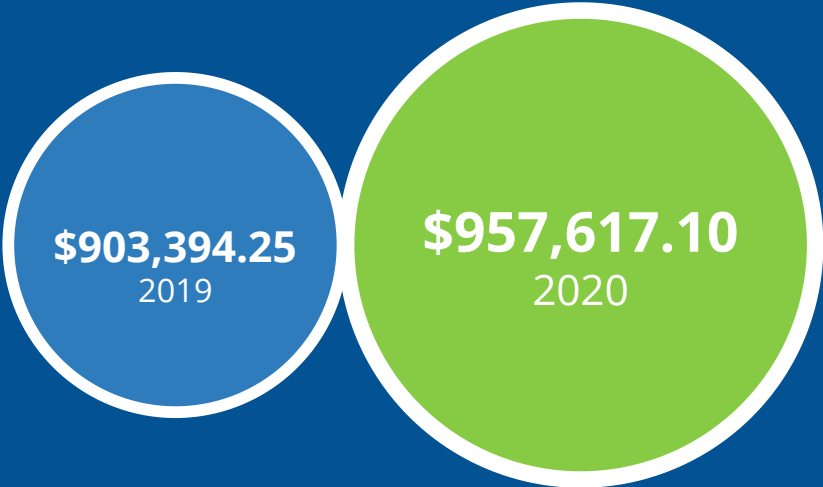
Home Rehabilitation Trust Fund Policy

The Board of Commissioners created the Home Rehabilitation Trust Fund Policy. This policy provides financial assistance to area nonprofit organizations that rehabilitate existing residential units to provide safe, decent, and affordable housing for low-income households in Grand Traverse County.



Community Trends for Grand Traverse County

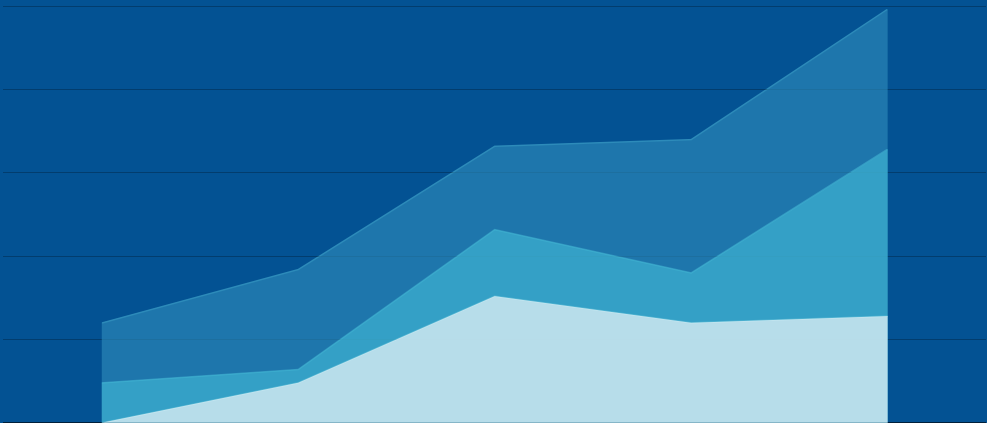
Real Estate Transaction Funds



2020 saw growth from \$903,394.25 to \$957,617.10 in money collected from real estate transactions within Grand Traverse County. This is a good indicator of the economic health within the region.

Property Value and Home Sales

There were 55,859 parcels of taxable property in the County for the 2020 Assessment year, an increase of .74% from 2019. The County Equalized Value (CEV) for Grand Traverse County for 2020 was \$7,354,713,405, an increase of 7.55% from 2019.



Population Growth



According to the most recent United States census data, Grand Traverse County's estimated population is 94,204, with a growth rate of 0.60% in the past year.

Engaging the Community

The National Community Survey (NCS)

In 2020, the County engaged the National Research Center/Polco (NRC) to conduct a county-wide survey. The survey sought public input on a wide variety of topics ranging from public safety to public infrastructure and other areas like access to health care and recreational opportunities. The [Livability Report](#) generated from the survey was provided to the Board of Commissioners at a December meeting. The Board intends to use the study in the future to help in strategic planning. This survey will be conducted every other year.

NCS Key Takeaways

- Residents consider Grand Traverse County a good place to live and visit.
- The natural environment is a valued part of Grand Traverse County.
- Housing and affordability were identified as areas for potential improvement.
- Health and wellness opportunities are high priorities for residents.

